

EMD BULLETIN

Emergency Management Department



Aram Sahakian, General Manager

200 North Spring Street, Room 1533, Los Angeles, CA 90012 ♦ Telephone: 213-484-4800
TTY: 213-978-0463 ♦ <http://emergency.lacity.org> ♦ [facebook.com/readyla](https://www.facebook.com/readyla) ♦ twitter.com/readyla

Date: July 24, 2016

To: Emergency Operations Board
Emergency Management Committee

From: Aram Sahakian, General Manager

Subject: SAND FIRE: HAZARDOUS AIR QUALITY AND ASH CLEAN-UP

SUMMARY

The Southern California Air Quality Management District and LA County Public Health have issued a Smoke Advisory for the City of Los Angeles including the LA Valleys and Basin through Sunday evening due to smoke from the Sand Fire burning in the Santa Clarita foothills.

Incident information for the Sand Fire: <http://www.fire.lacounty.gov/home/home-alt/>

According to the South Coast Air Quality Management District, smoke from the Sand Fire in has caused poor air quality that affects all individuals in the following areas of the City of Los Angeles:

- Central Los Angeles Area
- San Fernando Valley
- West San Gabriel Valley

All individuals in these areas, or areas where there is visible smoke or the odor of smoke, should avoid unnecessary outdoor exposure and to limit physical exertion (whether indoor or outdoor), such as exercise through the weekend. As the situation continues to evolve, the advisory may extend into other areas. Additionally, ash from the Sand Fire has collected on the ground in some areas.

SMOKE SAFETY

The Los Angeles County Interim Health Officer advises all individuals to take precautions during clean-up following a fire. Ash, soot, dust, and other airborne particles may have been deposited inside and outside of homes and businesses. While ash from wildfires is relatively non-toxic and similar to ash that may be found in a home fireplace, it may be irritating to the skin, nose and throat. Exposure to ash in air might trigger asthmatic attacks in people who already have asthma.

As a covered entity under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City of Los Angeles does not discriminate on the basis of disability and, upon request, will provide reasonable accommodation to ensure equal access to its programs, services and activities.

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The following recommendations will help you protect yourself and your family from harmful effects of bad air quality:

- If you see or smell smoke, or see a lot of particles and ash in the air, avoid unnecessary outdoor activity to limit your exposure to harmful air. This is especially important for those with heart or lung disease (including asthma), the elderly and children.
- If outdoor air is bad, try to keep indoor air as clean as possible by keeping windows and doors closed. Air conditioners that re-circulate air within the home or cars can help filter out harmful particles.
- Avoid using air conditioning units that only draw in air from the outside or that do not have a re-circulating option. Residents should check the filters on their air conditioners and replace them regularly. Indoor air filtration devices with HEPA filters can further reduce the level of particles that circulate indoors.
- If it is too hot during the day to keep the doors or windows closed and you do not have an air conditioning unit that re-circulates indoor air, consider going to an air conditioned public place, such as a library or shopping center, to stay cool and to protect yourself from harmful air.
- If you have symptoms of lung or heart disease that may be related to smoke exposure, including severe coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, palpitations, nausea or unusual fatigue or lightheadedness, contact your doctor immediately or go to an urgent care center.

Special precautions should also be taken for service or working animals and pets. The following is recommended for animals and pets:

- Avoid leaving your pets outdoors, particularly at night. Pets should be brought into an indoor location, such as an enclosed garage or a house.
- If dogs or cats appear to be in respiratory distress, they should be taken to an animal hospital immediately. Symptoms of respiratory distress for dogs include panting and/or an inability to catch their breath. Symptoms for cats are less noticeable, but may include panting and/or an inability to catch their breath.
- Special care should be taken to protect their paws from fallen ash and hot pavement.

ASH CLEANUP

Ash, soot, dust, and other airborne particles may have been deposited inside and outside of homes and businesses.

- Do not allow children to play in ash, especially in wet or damp ash.
- Wash toys before children play with them.

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- Bathe pets to rid them of ash.
- During clean-up, wear gloves such as household dish washing gloves, long sleeved shirts and long pants to avoid skin contact. If you do get ash on your skin, wash it off as soon as possible.
- If you have a vegetable garden or fruit trees, wash the fruit or vegetables thoroughly before eating them.
- Avoid getting ash into the air as much as possible. Do not use leaf blowers or take other actions that will put ash into the air. Instead, gentle sweeping of indoor and outdoor surfaces, followed by wet mopping, is the best way to clean an area with ash. A solution of bleach and water may be used to disinfect an area, if desired.
- Shop vacuums and regular household vacuum cleaners do not filter out small particles, but instead blow such particles into the air where they can be breathed. Use of regular vacuums is not advised however HEPA-filter vacuums could be used.
- A dust mask, such as a surgical mask or a mask rated N-95, may be worn during clean-up to avoid breathing in ash and other airborne particles.
- Avoid washing ash into storm drains whenever possible. Use as little water as possible when cleaning an area of ash.
- Collected ash may be disposed of in the regular trash by placing it in a plastic trash bag first.
- If a job appears to be too big, consider hiring a professional cleaning service. There are several businesses in LA County that specialize in post-fire clean-up that may be found in the phone book. Please contact a professional if there is substantial damage or destruction to a structure.

FOOD SAFETY

Some homeowners may have experienced a power outage or could find that their kitchens have ash, soot, dust, and other airborne particles. Follow these recommendations to avoid foodborne illness:

- Plastic bottles of liquid, such as water, that have been covered with ash should be discarded. It is not enough to rinse off the bottle as these particles contaminate the caps, making them very difficult to decontaminate.
- Food that has not been stored in waterproof or airtight containers and has been covered with ash should be discarded. This includes products that have been stored in cardboard or other soft packaging.
- Food stored in sealed, previously unopened glass or metal cans or jars, such as baby food, should be safe for use. Clean before opening and transfer the contents to another container before eating.
- All other food items should be inspected to ensure safety. If in doubt, throw it out.

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HEAT ISSUES: COOLING CENTERS

The Excessive Heat Warning for the City of Los Angeles has expired. Temperatures in the San Fernando Valley will be in the mid to high 90s. While the heat is no longer extreme, some City and County facilities will be open Sunday for residents. Hours vary by facility.

- **City Libraries**

Hours of operation for libraries vary by facility. Find your local branch at www.lapl.org/branches or by calling (213) 228-7000 for specific hours of operation.

- **City Recreation and Parks Facilities**

Hours of operation for recreation centers and senior centers vary by facility. Find your local recreation and senior center at <http://laparks.org> or 3-1-1 for specific hours of operation.

- **LA County Cooling Centers**

For further information on cooling center locations outside of the City, contact L.A. County 2-1-1. A list of the County's cooling centers can be found here: <http://bit.ly/CoolingCenters2016>.

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